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Colombia/Venezuela
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E.O. 12065: GDS 2/5/86 (JOHNSON, PHILIP) OR-P
TAGS: PBOR CO VE
SUBJECT: SECOND ROUND OF COLOMBIA-VENEZUELA MARITIME TALKS
ENDS ON CAUTIOUSLY OPTIMISTIC NOTE

REF: CARACAS 0906

1. (U) THE SECOND ROUND OF TALKS BETWEEN COLOMBIA AND VENEZUELA AIMED AT RESOLVING THEIR DISPUTE OVER THE GULF OF VENEZUELA ENDED JANUARY 29 IN PUERTO LA CRUZ THREE DAYS EARLIER THAN PLANNED. WHILE HESITATING TO MAKE DEFINITIVE PREDICTIONS, BOTH DELEGATIONS ARE QUOTED IN THE PRESS AS SAYING PROGRESS TOWARD A FINAL SETTLEMENT HAD BEEN MADE. (VENEZUELAN FOREIGN MINISTER JOSE ZAMBRANO VELSACO MADE A BRIEF VISIT TO PUERTO LA CRUZ JANUARY 27. ACCORDING TO GUSTAVO PLANCHART OF THE VENEZUELAN DELEGATION, ZAMBRANO WAS TO MEET WITH SOME FRIENDS ON THE COLOMBIAN DELEGATION, AND HIS VISIT WAS NOT SPECIFICALLY RELATED TO THE NEGOTIATIONS.)

2. (U) JORGE MARIO EASTMAN OF THE COLOMBIAN DELEGATION WAS QUOTED AS SAYING THE NEGOTIATIONS AT PUERTO LA CRUZ HAD CONSIDERED A SEPARATE AGREEMENT ON FISHING, NAVIGATION, AND OIL SUPPLIES INDEPENDENT OF THE QUESTION OF MARITIME DELIMITATION. IT IS ALSO REPORTED THE COLOMBIANS WILL BE STUDYING "NEW ASPECTS" OF THE MARITIME DISPUTE DURING A TWO MONTH RECESS IN THE TALKS, BUT CHOSE NOT TO REVEAL WHAT THEY MIGHT BE.

3. (U) NEGOTIATIONS ARE SCHEDULED TO RESUME MARCH 27 IN CALI, COLOMBIA.

4. (C) THE AMBASSADOR SPOKE WITH VENEZUELAN ADMIRAL ORTA ZAMBRANO, SECRETARY OF THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL AND A MEMBER OF THE VENEZUELAN DELEGATION, ABOUT THE PUERTO LA CRUZ MEETINGS. ORTA SAID HE WAS OPTIMISTIC THAT AN AGREEMENT CAN BE REACHED. HE SAID THE DIFFERENCES HAVE BEEN NARROWED CONSIDERABLY. ORTA SAID THE PROBLEM IS THAT THE COLOMBIANS STILL WANT TO INCLUDE AN ECONOMIC DIMENSION IN THE TALKS, BUT VENEZUELA WANTS STRICTLY A LEGAL SOLUTION. ORTA ALSO SAID HE BELIEVES THE VENEZUELAN ARMED FORCES ARE ON BOARD SO FAR. HE WAS, HOWEVER, DISTURBED ABOUT THE PAID ARTICLE THAT APPEARED IN THE PAPERS RECENTLY BY A GROUP OF SUPER NATIONALISTS "COMMUNIQUE OF THE FRONT FOR THE DEFENSE OF THE TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY AND NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY OF VENEZUELA" WHICH CRITICIZED THE NEGOTIATIONS. (THE ARTICLE STRENUOUSLY SECONDED THE OBJECTIONS OF THE VENEZUELAN NATIONAL ACADEMY OF HISTORY--REFTEL--TO THE CEDING OF WHAT THEY CONSIDER VENEZUELAN TERRITORY. THUS, MORE SUPER-

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PATRIOTS ARE COMING OFF THE BACK BENCHES TO PRESSURE THE GOV.)
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END OF MESSAGE

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